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Freud's Archaeology

1 In his early essay "The Aetiology of Hysteria" (1896), Freud sets up a significant parallel between archaeology and psychoanalysis to which he will return in various ways in the course of his career:

> Imagine that an explorer arrives in a little-known region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with the remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tablets with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions. He may content himself with inspecting what lies exposed to view, with questioning the inhabitants—perhaps semi-barbaric people—who live in the vicinity, about what tradition tells them of the history and meaning of these archaeological remains, and with noting down what they tell him—and he may then proceed on his journey. But he may act differently. He may have brought picks, shovels, and spades with him, and he may set the inhabitants to work with these implements. Together with them he may start upon the ruins, clear away the rubbish, and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried. If his work is crowned with success, the discoveries are self-explanatory: the ruined walls are part of the ramparts of a palace or treasure-house; the fragments of columns can be filled out into a temple; the numerous inscriptions, which, by good luck, may be bilingual, reveal an alphabet and a language, and, when they have been deciphered and translated, yield undreamed-of information about the events of the remote past, to commemorate which the monuments were built. *Saxa loquuntur!* [the stones speak] (Freud, 1962, 192)

2 The psychoanalyst is like Freud's skeptical explorer ("Forscher"), the one who is not contented with what is under his eyes, but always carries picks and spades with him and works through all manners of impediments in order to push the boundaries of knowledge beyond the visible, into the uncharted and unknown. Archaeology and psychoanalysis are similar in that they both look for origins (the Greek αρχή from which modern archaeology takes its name) by means of deep reading. Both are disciplines of excavation that bring the past back to the surface and re-assemble it, making it legible. Digging the earth, archaeology endeavors to find the origins of a

given civilization; whereas psychoanalysis digs inside the mind to look for the hidden origins of the present self, which are buried within the individual psyche by unconscious mechanisms of repression.

3 It is significant that, in order to present the challenge of psychoanalysis to established forms of knowledge, Freud should refer to archaeology rather than other disciplines for the study of the ancient past such as philology, textual criticism, history or art history. Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, Freud was aware of the fact that, over the past few decades, archaeological research had caused a minor revolution within classical studies: its practitioners were questioning the very notion of the classical ideal made popular in the eighteenth century by Johann Joachim Winckelmann and his neo-classical followers. Recently recovered objects, like the Greek Tanagra figurines and archaic statuettes that Freud was fond of collecting, strongly suggested that an authentic view of antiquity would look much more primitive and altogether less "classical" than previously thought. To give a simplified account, we could say that in the course of the nineteenth century, as the science of antiquity (*Altertumswissenschaft*) became more and more advanced, antiquity itself became paradoxically more and more remote and obscure, as researchers delved into the pre-classical pasts of an ancient civilization and into those aspects of its daily life that had remained unrecorded by writers and historians.

4 Freud's analogy therefore seems set up in order to suggest that archaeology and psychoanalysis are both caught within this dialectic between the known and the unknown, juxtaposing as it does the visible and the invisible, memory and forgetting, transmission and occlusion of meaning. As Richard H. Armstrong has noted, though, at this early career stage Freud also turns to archaeology as a "paradigm of success," implicitly comparing the emergence of psychoanalysis to well-known episodes such as the remarkable achievements of Heinrich Schliemann's excavations of Troy and Mycenae in the 1870s (Armstrong, 2006, 112).[1] Armstrong, who playfully speaks of "spade envy" to denote Freud's "yearning for a clear and distinct body of demonstrable evidence," emphasizes the imagery of material riches in the previous quotation, reading the narrative of archaeological discovery as a rhetorical strategy of self-assertion (Armstrong, 2006, 112). Indeed the extract puts forward a belief in revelation and perfect legibility: the remnants are easily reassembled into buildings, the unknown alphabet and language are easily deciphered. In this enlightenment parable all is both "undreamed-of" and "self-explanatory": the efforts of the bold explorer are repaid with spectacular findings. But, if we take a closer look at the relationship between language, text and stone set up by Freud, the rational scaffolding begins to crack under pressure from irrational elements.

5 The brief extract from "The Aetiology of Hysteria" gives a realistic snapshot of nineteenth-century archaeology, full of vivid detail: it describes a voyage of exploration that leads to conquest and dispossession, like Schliemann's, or one of the many other expeditions that were breaking new ground in Greece, Egypt and Mesopotamia, and that were unearthing the artistic treasures that were transported to the museums of European capitals like Vienna, Berlin and London. The political implications of nineteenth-century archaeology do not go unnoticed by Freud, who gives us a glimpse of the encounter between foreign explorer and "semi-barbaric" natives, as the two parties negotiate the different cultural and material values of the ruins. The realism of the passage, though, and its analogical function, are twisted and transfigured in the

abrupt climax, "*Saxa loquuntur!*" (the stones speak) which, as Derrida has noticed, undoes Freud's logic: the image of the speaking stones effectively renders the labor of the archaeologist void, as the ruins are shown to be capable of revealing their meaning by themselves, without the intervention of the expert interpreter (Derrida, 1998, 92-3).[2] Derrida is right in seeing something "hallucinatory" in this abrupt change in register (Derrida, 1998, 94). The Latin words mirror the return of the ancient ruins on the level of textuality: they introduce a voice from the remote past which brings with it elements of foreignness, mystery and myth that complicate the simple narrative of revelation-as-enlightenment. The dead language comes back to disturb the realism and ethos of *Wissenschaft* expressed by the German language in the scientific essay, like a spectral presence. It erupts from the sentence like a survival: these ancestral, foreign words which are not Freud's introduce into the passage what lies beyond the boundary of translation and domestication. For there is a sense that the language of the stones will always, at best, elude the efforts of the scientist or, at worst, disrupt them, revealing, by spectral analogy, the failure, not the success, of enlightenment ideology.

6 Freud's extract from "The Aetiology of Hysteria" is therefore not so much an archaeological analogy as an archaeological fantasy. As such it taps into a substantial canon of uncanny and fantastic literature associated with archaeological recoveries that had been growing in popularity since the early decades of the nineteenth century. By endowing the material remnants of the past with uncanny powers, the archaeological fantastic (not unlike psychoanalysis) bares the hidden dark side of *Altertumswissenschaft*: it reveals the crisis of knowledge that gnaws away at the heart of the science of antiquity, and manifests it in the form of a psychological meta-critique of reason, desire and ambition. This sub-genre of the fantastic developed alongside the popular genres of archaeological reportage and archaeological memoir especially in countries that were then at the forefront of archaeological research, such as the German-speaking lands, France and Britain. Freud himself would turn to the literature of the archaeological fantastic in his essay (1907) on Wilhelm Jensen's short story *Gradiva* (1902), in which he formulates one of his most powerful cases for psychoanalysis as a method of literary analysis.

Statues and Transgressive Desires in Henry James

7 My analysis of the archaeological fantastic goes back to the 1870s—a crucial decade in the history of classical archaeology. It focuses on an early story by Henry James, "The Last of the Valerii," in which, like Freud, James draws on archaeology in order to investigate the relationship between the buried secrets of the soil and the hidden desires of the individual mind. At the same time, James also self-consciously looks backwards to the international canon of the archaeological fantastic, especially to Prosper Mérimée's "La Venus d'Ille" (1837), which is the buried ur-text within "The Last of the Valerii." Less visible but equally foundational to James is a body of writings on the aesthetics of ancient sculpture by critics such as Walter Pater, Winckelmann and Goethe, with which the story engages. I aim to show how this relatively little-known short story sets up an intricate set of relations and metaphorical correspondences between stone and language, sculpture and literature, antiquity and modernity, aesthetics and psychology.

8 "The Last of the Valerii" was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in January 1874, when James was thirty-one years old; subsequent versions appeared in the collections *A Passionate Pilgrim and Other Tales* (1875) and *Stories Revived* (1885), the latter with fairly substantial revisions. The tale is set in modern Rome, where a wealthy American young woman named Martha marries Count Camillo Valerio, an impoverished but strikingly attractive Roman aristocrat. Fascinated by the heritage into which she has married, Martha persuades her husband to undertake some archaeological excavations in the grounds of their villa—a giant, somewhat dilapidated park located within the walls of Rome, filled with fragments of antiquities. When they unearth a majestic marble statue of Juno, the story takes a supernatural turn. The Count seems to undergo a strange conversion to paganism, as he starts worshiping the statue, hides its broken hand in a silver box that he keeps in his cabinet and, at the same time, becomes alienated from his wife, shunning her physical contact. Eventually Martha decides that the only way to rescue her marriage is to re-bury the Juno, in a bizarre ritual re-enactment of a Christian funeral. The story ends as Count Camillo seems restored to normal behavior by the re-interment, although we then find out that, years later, the broken hand of the Juno is still his treasured possession. The events are narrated from the point of view of Martha's American godfather, who acts as a detached observer.

9 In an influential reading J. Hillis Miller has seen "The Last of the Valerii" as shaped by the conflicting drives of prosopopoeia, or "giving a face, a body, and a name to an inanimate chunk of stone," and its reverse, depersonalization or reification (Miller, 1990, 218). Central to this dynamics, according to Miller, is James's use of the archaeological fragment, which becomes interchangeable with the human body part, creating a deliberate confusion between the way we "read" people and things that is at the core of the aesthetic and ethical problems that James works out. Miller reads James's tale within a long tradition of exploiting the trope of prosopopoeia that stretches back to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. More immediately, though, James's evocative use of archaeology places "The Last of the Valerii" within the nineteenth-century genre of the archaeological fantastic, as later picked up by Freud, with which it shares a number of important characteristics: the uncanny return of the past, the power of the recovered object to unleash repressed desires, the clash between the old and the new world. Like Freud, James uses the trope of the speaking stones to confer a spectral agency to the material remains of antiquity. The narrator confesses to the habit of lingering about the "nameless statues and noseless heads and rough-hewn sarcophagi" scattered on the grounds of the Roman villa, "half-expecting they would speak and tell me their stony secrets—whisper heavily the whereabouts of their mouldering fellows, still unrecovered from the soil" (James, 1978, 263). Later in the story his impression of the Pantheon is haunted by the same fantasy: here the "huge dusky dome seems to the spiritual ear to hold a vague reverberation of pagan worship, as a gathered shell holds the rumor of the sea" (274). The aural metaphor conveys an impossible desire for knowledge, disclosure and decipherment. James pictures antiquity revealing itself without archaeology, to the sensitive observer rather than the scientist: spectrality is the medium through which the "stony secrets" of the past manifest themselves to the present. These fantasies are the more striking since they take hold on the narrator whose suspiciousness and pragmatism are designed to offset the impressionable vulnerability of the Count, lending credibility to the improbable events in the eyes of the reader.

10 Indeed, while the voices of the stones remain consigned to fantasy for the narrator, they certainly take on a much more embodied form for the Count who, by his own admission, sees the statues as "ghosts" and who cannot bear to look at them in the face because he "seem[s] to see other strange eyes in the empty sockets," adding, in a revealing *non sequitur*, "I hardly know what they say to me" (266). Focusing on the Count's psychosexual degeneration, the story exploits the same equivalence between archaeological and psychological excavation that Freud would spell out clearly in 1896. Digging the ground of the Roman villa, which Martha imagines being "as full of buried treasures as a bride-cake of plums" (265), is like a journey of exploration into the mechanisms for the management and repression of male sexual desire. The earth hides the memory of the past, in the form of the buried statue, just as the Count's psyche hides deep-seated instincts and desires that, once released, threaten his mental equilibrium and the social contract represented by his marriage.

11 If James's suggestive image of the Roman soil as a "bride-cake full of plums" is a prelude to Freud's fantasy of archaeology as a science of easy and substantial gains, it also nods back to a long novelistic and critical tradition of presenting post-classical Rome as a city that was literally built on an invisible, vast, unstructured underground museum. Most relevant in this sense is Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860), a novel that represented for the young James an example of an exquisitely and distinctly American way of writing about Italy—an opinion that James would modify later on as he came to appreciate its limitations, especially its inability or refusal to embrace a truly cosmopolitan point of view (James, 1914, 382-4). In *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne puts forward a spatial understanding of history as material accumulation of layer upon layer of hidden objects, which has clear echoes in James:

> A spade can scarcely be put into that soil, so rich in lost and forgotten things, without hitting upon some discovery which would attract all eyes, in any other land. If you dig but a little way, you gather bits of precious marble, coins, rings, and engraved gems; if you go deeper, you break into columbaria, or into sculptured and richly frescoed apartments that look like festive halls, but were only sepulchres. (Hawthorne, 2002, 328)

12 In Rome the soil becomes richer and richer the deeper you dig into it, but it is telling that the deepest and most splendid layer is also a *memento mori*. The festive hall-as-sepulchre shows the special power of the archaeological object to make the present face its own inevitable destruction: the uncanny yoking of life and death causes modernity to imagine itself, projected into a remote future, as having become obsolescent or spectral.

13 As a recovery of "forgotten things" archaeology for Hawthorne is a discipline of re-membering in the double meaning of recovering through memory but also piecing back together, working to repair the dismembering of ancient civilization by the hand of time and history. Because of its relationship of mimesis with the human body, the recovered statue is a particularly powerful symbol of this double meaning: as the rhetoric of intrusion and invasion in the previous passage reveals, unearthing the material remnants of the past always has an element of profanation, of waking the dead or deliberately looking for ghosts. Hawthorne explicitly alerts his readers to the uncanny relationship between sculpture and corpse in a scene that immediately follows the previous quotation, in which the American protagonist, Keynon, discovers, scattered in the soil, the fragments of a "wonderfully delicate and beautiful" (328) ancient statue, which he easily pieces back together to reveal a Venus:

> Placing these limbs in what the nice adjustment of the fractures proved to be their true position, the poor, fragmentary woman forthwith showed that she retained her modest instincts to the last. She had perished with them, and snatched them back at the moment of revival. For these long-buried hands immediately disposed themselves in the manner that nature prompts, as the antique artist knew, and as all the world has seen, in the Venus de Medici. (328-9)

14 What is particularly interesting in this twist on the fantasy of archaeology as spectacular revelation is that Hawthorne deliberately sexualizes the archaeologist's physical incursion into the past. The atmosphere of voyeurism, necrophilia and sexual violation is accentuated by the grotesque image of the personified sculptural nude (the "poor, fragmentary woman") modestly shielding its sex and breasts in the famous attitude of the Venus de Medici, as if it were a reanimated corpse suddenly become conscious of its nakedness under the erotic touch of the Pygmalion-like archaeologist.

15 In a greatly influential essay on the aesthetics of ancient sculpture, which had recently been reissued in book form when James wrote "The Last of the Valerii," Walter Pater depicts the neoclassical critic Johann Joachim Winckelmann at work in the Roman collections of ancient art, as he "fingers those pagan marbles with unsinged hands, with no sense of shame or loss" (Pater, 1980, 177).[3] Playing on the uncanny resemblance between human body and sculptural nude, Pater deliberately creates a slippage between the study of aesthetics and sexual pleasure similar to that described by Hawthorne. Winckelmann's touch is a daring act of archaeological recovery in that it undoes the "loss" caused by the historical distance between the present and the classical past. The erotic touch as action that generates meaning and memory is a permutation of the fantasy of "*saxa loquuntur*": the humanized archaeological object unlocks hidden meanings that cannot be accessed through the rational idiom of scholarship. Pater's image contains a hint to Winckelmann's homosexuality—a type of desire that conjured negative connotations at the time and that is accessible in the essay only on the level of subtext, through indirect reference, euphemism and allusion.

16 As well as evoking the perverse archaeology of *The Marble Faun*, count Camillo's obsessions with the Roman goddess in "The Last of the Valerii" may therefore be an echo of Pater, who argued that Winckelmann had made himself a pagan in Rome in order to be fully attuned to the culture of antiquity. In fact, James's story falls into a widespread nineteenth-century tradition of equating paganism with unregulated or perverse sexual desire, recently brought to the renewed attention of Anglophone readers not only by the allusive Pater but also by the *succès de scandale* of A.C. Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* (1866). We are given to understand that the encounter with the unearthed Juno frees a deep-seated sympathy with pagan religion that was latent in the Count all along. There is something playful in James's use of paganism as disturbing element in the couple dynamics between an American Protestant and a Catholic Italian aristocrat—a situation with which James experiments here for the first time and would later reuse, to greater effect, especially in *The Golden Bowl* (1904).[4]

17 But the tone of the narrator is entirely serious when he diagnoses the Count as having "reverted to the faith of his fathers" (James, 1978, 279). The aristocratic Valerii can trace their lineage all the way back to Roman times and the narrator sees this "interminable ancestry" in degenerative terms as a "heavy heritage" and the Count himself as "a dark efflorescence of the evil germs which history had implanted in his line" (272). The Count's direct genetic link with the classical past makes him especially susceptible to being haunted by it:

> What a heavy heritage it seemed to me, as I reckoned it up in my melancholy musings, the Count's interminable ancestry! Back to the profligate revival of arts and vices,—back to the bloody medley of mediaeval wars,—back through the long, fitfully-glaring dusk of the early ages to its ponderous origin in the solid Roman state,—back through all the darkness of history,—it seemed to stretch, losing every feeblest claim on my sympathies as it went. Such a record was in itself a curse [...]. (272)

18 As his present self is refracted and fragmented in this *mise en abyme* of family history, the Count takes on the same patina of history as the statue, acting as a material link between the nineteenth century and the darkest ages of history, which the narrator views with an evident sense of distaste.

19 Despite his impressive aristocratic pedigree there is something semi-barbaric about Count Camillo, which recalls the native inhabitants of Freud's archaeological wonderland, and which in James's text is described as part and parcel of his national heritage. The Italian man in charge of the archaeological excavation—a Pan-like figure reminiscent of Heinrich Heine's gods in exile—corroborates the narrator's suspicions: claiming to have learnt "a multitude of secrets" by fumbling "so long in the monstrous heritage of antiquity," he explains that "[t]here is a pagan element in all of us—I don't speak for you, *illustrissimi forestieri*" (278). The clash between past and present staged by "The Last of the Valerii" is therefore not only that between the material culture of antiquity and its modern interpreters, but between the Old World, morally weakened by its long history, and the New World, whose modernity makes it immune to this draw towards regression. The transatlantic marriage has the potential to heal this rift but the underground supernatural plot works against a natural resolution as the Count is pulled back towards his own ancestral pagan origins and turns away from his wife.

20 The currency that Martha brings to the marriage is therefore not so much, or not only, money, as the story explicitly declares from the start, but blood: the modern healthy blood that has the capability to strengthen and re-invigorate the weakened genetic line of the Count. The narrator is aware of this symbolic economy when, at the height of the crisis, he exclaims that Martha should have given herself instead to "some wholesome young fellow of our own blood" (272). Blood and stone are the two symbols around which the psychosexual narrative is constructed: the one connected with health, change and regeneration; the other with disease and regression. The perverse communion between the two symbols is revealed in a crucial scene, when Martha and the narrator discover freshly spilled blood on an improvised altar made of "a nameless fragment of antique marble" (280), and realize that the Count has made a blood sacrifice to the statue. This episode—perhaps a euphemistic rewriting of Pliny's anecdote of a man who left a semen stain on the Knidian Aphrodite as obscene evidence of his lust—is a clear indication of the wasting of the Count's healthy sexual energy, easily interpreted by both the characters within the story and the readers (Pliny, 1962, 10:17).

21 In 1907, roughly twenty years after he first employed the image of archaeological discovery for the retrieval of the unconscious, Freud returned to examine the parallel between archaeological and psychoanalytic method in his well-known essay on Wilhelm Jensen's novella *Gradiva: A Pompeiian Fantasy* (1902)—a short fiction that is also based on the perverse substitution of stone images for bodies of flesh and blood. This time Freud's encounter with archaeology is openly mediated by a literary text and, as Cathy Caruth suggests, it takes on the self-reflexive quality, later picked up on by

Derrida, of a meditation not only on the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature but also on the very possibility of memory in psychoanalysis (Caruth, 2013, 82-4). Freud famously claims that in the *Gradiva*, the *deus ex machina* Miss Zoe Bertgang takes on the role of the psychoanalyst as she manages to redirect the protagonist Harold's sexual desire from statues to real women by means of an impromptu session of the talking cure (Freud, 2009, 117 ff.).[5] Borrowing Freud's interpretation of Jensen, we can see "The Last of the Valerii" as a proto-psychoanalytic tale, arguing that James uses the archaeological fantastic in order to represent both the symptoms and the cure of a psychosexual neurosis. In "The Last of the Valerii" both the narrator and Martha are cast in the role of diagnosticians as they try to make sense of the Count's transformation into an impotent husband. While the narrator takes no steps beyond declaring the Count "a precious psychological study" (276), it is, as in Jensen's tale, the woman who attempts treatment. Understanding that the statue represents a form of desire that needs to be counteracted if her husband's sexuality is to resume its proper function, Martha devises the literal re-burial of the Juno that is the story's *denouement*. The ending of the story emphatically redeploys the sexually-loaded metaphor of burial, as the apparently repentant Count "buried his head in [Martha's] lap" (283), in a gesture that seems to hint at the resumption of his conjugal obligations. Martha is a bad psychoanalyst, though, because her cure is based on a violent act of repression rather than dialogue. When we discover that the broken arm of the Juno stays behind in the Count's cabinet we realize that the cure is only apparent, as the title of the story ironically underlines. Camillo is the last of the Valerii not, as auspicated by the narrator, in the sense that he will be the last pagan in his family line, but in the literal sense that his marriage will remain sexless or at least sterile, stones prevailing over blood in the end.[6]

Textual Archaeology: From James to Mérimée

22 As several critics have noted "The Last of the Valerii" is heavily based on Prosper Mérimée's "La Venus d'Ille" (1837), a short story that James knew very well, having attempted to publish his own translation of it a few years previously (see Durand-Bogaert, 1999). "La Venus d'Ille" is also about a recently disinterred ancient statue—a bronze Venus recovered in the South West of France—which gets in the way of a modern sexual relationship: in Mérimée the animated statue mysteriously crushes a groom to death on his wedding night, before the marriage can be consummated. And like James's tale, "La Venus d'Ille" ends with the disposal of the ancient object, as the Venus is melted down and turned into a church bell in order to prevent further disruption. Writing "The Last of the Valerii," James in a sense continued the labor of translation that never made it in print, rendering the source text in a different form. In so doing he kept close enough to encourage the reader to compare the two works, as is emphasized by James's decision, in November 1875, to publish a French translation of his tale in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, the same journal in which Mérimée's tale had first appeared nearly forty years earlier. In his reading of Freud's *Gradiva* essay in *Archive Fever*, Derrida suggests that, in Freud's psychoanalytic understanding of memory, the desire for archiving and the desire for remembering through inscription and obliteration go hand in hand in an uneasy but inevitable alliance. Borrowing this paradigm that is itself formulated on the basis of archaeological fiction and applying it to the way in which James remembers Mérimée, we could argue that within "The Last

of the Valerii"—a story about the potentially disruptive power of unearthing the past —"La Venus d'Ille" functions as a buried object from the literary past: James's archaeological imagination performs a contradictory act of bringing to light, as it were, Mérimée, for English readers, while at the same time repressing and erasing Mérimée's tale by superimposing his own textual stratum on it; or, building on another of Derrida's images, James practices an art of creative "translation" that is in fact a spectral projection of Mérimée's supernatural tale (Derrida, 1998, 84).

23 James had been introduced to Mérimée in his early American years by his friend, the Franco-American artist John La Farge. In the months surrounding the publication of "The Last of the Valerii," James published two reviews of works by Mérimée in the *Nation* and the *Independent* respectively. In the second review, he declared it "a capital offence in a young story-teller to put pen to paper without having read [his tales] and digested them"—the metaphor of digestion being a physiological analogue for the process of remembrance as obliteration and spectralization suggested by Derrida (James, 1878, 391). The same sense of qualified admiration reappears much later, in *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914), where, looking back on his early years, James speaks of "the square and dense little formal garden" of Mérimée's style, conveying the impression of an exquisite but austere and somewhat impenetrable literary model (James, 1914, 92). James's archaeological or digested version of Mérimée departs from the original most obviously in the shift of focus signaled in the title, from haunting object to haunted subject, whose psychology is much more developed in James than in Mérimée. The other major revision is the change from Venus to Juno. In a macabre updating of the ancient cult of the goddess, Mérimée's Venus returns to the modern world in order to officiate a perverse marriage ritual, in which the deflowering of the bride is substituted by the brutal killing of the groom. Like Mérimée, James forges his supernatural plot out of mythic elements specific to his goddess, for the Roman Juno is of course connected with sexual jealousy and marital trouble; Juno's more ambivalent femininity, as critics have observed, turns her into a phallic mother, adding to the atmosphere of fetishism and gender blurring that dominates this tale, which Donatella Izzo and John Carlos Rowe among others have seen as playing out a problematic ambivalence towards femininity (Izzo, 2001, 58-76; Rowe, 1998, 38; Miller, 1990, 231).[7]

24 Most relevant in the context of this essay, though, is the way in which the two writers interact with the archaeological imagination as it developed in the course of the nineteenth century. Aside from being the author of successful exotic tales, Mérimée was a well-respected scholar and archaeologist. In "La Venus d'Ille" he draws attention to archaeology as a science of interpretation by making his narrator an archaeologist and by including small learned puzzles that work as reality effects, engaging the philological competence of the reader: used in this way, archaeology functions as the link between the realism and the fantastic in the story, setting up the same uncanny relationship between *Wissenschaft* and dream that would fascinate Freud.[8] But the tale was also clearly meant to call to mind an actual historical event which would have been fresh in the memory of his contemporary French readers: the recovery, in 1820, of the Venus de Milo, which was installed in the Louvre in 1822 and immediately became one of the icons of nineteenth-century Hellenism. The story of the accidental discovery of the statue by a Greek peasant, the mystery of its missing arms and its move to Paris were reported widely both in specialized publications and in the popular press (see Curtis, 2005). Mérimée's tale is in dialogue with this body of popular archaeological

reportage, transposing its use of romance into the supernatural and thereby highlighting the ambiguous cultural valence of archaeology as both revelation and a source of further myth-making and mystification.

The Head of the Juno

25 "The Last of the Valerii" was also published during a period of intense and extremely fruitful archaeological activity. When the story came out in January 1874, Schliemann had been excavating ancient Troy for some time and the news of his recovery of the so-called Treasure of Priam in 1873 attracted widespread attention in the international press. James's story, though, unlike Mérimée's, does not seem to point to any specific archaeological find. In many ways its historical archive is to be found in James's impressions of Rome, as recorded in his travel writings and private correspondence from these years. James visited Rome for the first time in 1869, before the Italian Unification, in the last days of the Popes' government, when the city appeared to him, as to most foreign tourists, as a charming relic of bygone ages, which had somehow escaped the inevitable forces of modernization. His letters to his family are full of a sense of aesthetic revelation and, writing to Grace Norton, he captures this pervading presence of the past describing the "air" of the city as "thick with the presence of invisible ghosts" (James, 2006, 2:202). When James came back to Rome in 1872, for an extended stay, he immediately noticed a change of atmosphere, reporting to his father "a kind of modernized air in the streets, a multiplication of shops, carts, newspaper-stalls" (James, 2008-11, 1:163; see also Mamoli Zorzi, 2013).

26 The Villa Valerii described in the story conjures the magic atmosphere of the old, pre-Unification Rome that was fast disappearing after the city's annexation to the Italian Kingdom in 1870s and its proclamation as Italian capital in 1871. Its buildings and park are a fictional *bricolage* of various old Roman villas that James visited in the early 1870s, but several clues in the text point directly to the Villa Ludovisi as the author's main source of inspiration. The seventeenth-century Villa Ludovisi left a particularly strong impression on James who remarked in a travel sketch from this period that there is "nothing more blissfully *right* in Rome, nothing more consummately consecrated to style" (James, 1992, 191). Like the park of the fictional Villa Valerii, the grounds of the Villa Ludovisi had long been a treasure-trove for archaeological finds and, at the time of James's writing, they housed one of the world's most important open-air collections of antique sculptures. In particular its casino, which in the late nineteenth century was open to the public, contained a jumble of sculptural remains that included a colossal head of Juno known as the Juno Ludovisi, a fragment of what must have been a gigantic statue that has now gone lost. The "Casino" (269) or garden-house in which Count Camillo Valerii installs the Juno and carries out his pagan rites bears an obvious resemblance to the casino Ludovisi, where in 1873 James saw "the head of the great Juno [...] thrust into a corner behind a shutter," as he describes in the same travel sketch (James, 1992, 191). James belonged to the last generations of tourists to see the statue *in situ*: for, a little after ten years from the story's publication, the grounds of the Villa Ludovisi would be the object of one of the most reckless property speculations of United Italy. The grounds of the villa were sold off by their impoverished aristocratic owners and "developed" into the Rione Ludovisi, which became an example of modern urban planning and modern hygiene, dotted with state-of-the-art international hotels;

at the same time the collections of sculptures were moved into publicly-owned museums. The redevelopment of the Villa Ludovisi was an act of symbolic re-orientation of the Eternal City from the past to the future. In 1874 "The Last of the Valerii" captures this moment of historical transition with astonishing foresight. In staging a violent clash between the past and the present, the fantastic archaeological narrative provides a snapshot of the city as it grapples with its historic and material heritage, readjusting itself from being the anachronistic city of the Popes to having become the capital of a modern nation state, and asking fundamental questions about the proper ownership and display of its artistic treasures. In the story, these geo-political questions are transposed onto the domestic plane occupied by the odd marital triangle made up of the rich American bride, the impoverished Italian Count and his antique statue.

27 Could the head of the Juno glimpsed by James behind the mysterious screen in the Villa Ludovisi be the original material object that hides behind his archaeological fantasy? Attempting an answer to this question takes us beyond the problem of sources. While Mérimée's story plays with the emerging genre of archaeological reportage, James's tale of haunting engages with a canon of writings on aesthetics, establishing a dialogue with critics who theorized the cognitive and psychological processes at work in aesthetic responses to sculpture. Unlike the Venus de Milo, the Juno Ludovisi had been around for centuries when James published his story and had long been celebrated as an icon of eighteenth-century and romantic Hellenism. In the *History of the Art of Antiquity* (*Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, 1764), Winckelmann had praised it as the "most beautiful head" of the goddess in existence, drawing particular attention to the quality of her glance, which he described as "commanding, like a queen who wants to rule, be revered, and inspire love" (Winckelmann, 2006, 203). James's fantastic story literalizes this interpretation.

28 Within the tradition of modern Hellenism, though, the most influential response to the Juno Ludovisi did not come from Winckelmann, but from his follower and critic J.W. Goethe, who singles it out as the best example of a peculiar type of sculptural sublime that he associates with the city of Rome:

> When, as is the case in Rome, one constantly finds oneself in the presence of the plastic arts of antiquity, one feels as when one is in the presence of something infinite or unknowable in nature. The impression of the sublime, the beautiful, beneficent though this may be, disturbs us: we would like to set our feelings and our vision into words; first of all, however, we are required to recognize, see, understand; we begin to separate out, to differentiate, to organize, and this too we find, if not impossible, then certainly very difficult; and so we finally revert to the simple visual pleasure of admiration. [...] The first claims on our attention were made by the Juno Ludovisi, which was the more highly valued and revered as one got to see the original so seldom and fortuitously [...]; because none of our contemporaries approaching her for the first time may claim to be a match for this sight. (Goethe, 2004, 545-6)[9]

29 Borrowing from contemporary accounts of the natural sublime, Goethe claims that ancient sculptures place the modern viewer in contact with the infinite and the unknowable ("Unendlichen," "Unerforschlichen"), triggering an unsettling psychological phenomenon linked to the collapse of logic: the rational individual falls apart in Goethe's description, and is forced to revert to a pre-rational and pre-linguistic mode of artistic contemplation entirely based on pleasure and emotion. Once again, it is interesting to see how this passage looks forward to Freud. Goethe provides another

ur-text for the *saxa loquuntur* trope as he shows the material object usurping the rational faculties of the observer. Both writers base their archaeological fantasies on speech. Freud's speaking stones are at once the opposite and uncanny double of the image of the silenced interpreter with which Goethe's description culminates. For Goethe, the Juno Ludovisi is pre-eminent among the sculptures capable of provoking this uncanny experience partly because of its impressive size: the colossal fragment physically dwarfs the viewer by suggesting what it lacks as well as representing what has been preserved, evoking the unimaginable extent of the classical civilization that is lost to the moderns and conjuring the void onto which, literally, their knowledge of antiquity is based. It is a quintessential archaeological object because it simultaneously embodies meaning and loss, memory and forgetting.

30 In the *Italian Journey* (1816-17), Goethe relates how, during his stay in Rome, his intense fascination with this work led him to acquire a cast and place it in his Roman apartment. Goethe's autobiographical account of this episode deploys the same slippage between aesthetic and sexual desire on which James bases his story: "This was my first love affair in Rome, and now I possess her. No words can express this feeling. It was like a song of Homer" (Goethe, 2004, 154).[10] This further variation on the theme of the speaking stones places Goethe in dialogue with the literature of the archaeological fantastic that I have examined in this essay; the more clearly so as he goes on to credit the ancient fragment as the material and almost subliminal inspiration behind the Roman reworking of his neo-classical tragedy *Iphigenia* (1786), which many critics regard as his fullest penetration into the classical spirit. Goethe's desire to possess and domesticate the statue, which is rendered more remarkable by the fact that the colossal dimensions of the Juno make it an unlikely presence in a domestic setting, went on beyond his Roman stay, as he eventually installed a copy in his house in Weimar, where it still is to be found nowadays as part of the Klassik Stiftung Weimar. Goethe's biographical tale of obsession bears striking similarities with Freud's own acquisition, following his work on Jensen, of a copy of the Gradiva relief, which he hung in his study in Vienna. Both authors used the archaeological object (or its copy, as it happens) as part of the public *mise en scene* of their success.

31 It is unclear how familiar James was with Goethe's Italian writings in the 1870s. But the textual archaeology of "The Last of the Valerii" takes us back to Winckelmann and Goethe's writings on aesthetics as well as forwards to Freud's experiments with psychoanalytic deep readings of the mind. In *Roderick Hudson*, a novel published one year after "The Last of the Valerii," James comes back to the Juno Ludovisi in a passage that is conspicuous for being the first glimpse of the Roman setting that would play such an important role in the novel. Elements of the archaeological tale re-emerge from the more even surface of the realist text as the encounter with the statue creates "the spell [...] of supreme romance" in the two main characters, who linger in the avenues of the ancestral park of the villa, and the impressionable young Roderick ends up drained, declaring that "he would go nowhere else, that after the Juno it was a profanation to look at anything but sky and trees" (James, 1994, 63). Roderick's sense of fatigue and mental paralysis are similar to the emotions described by Goethe. But readers of "The Last of the Valerii" might well recognize here the perverse effect of a familiar face, reading the words "spell" and "romance" in their full uncanny significance and knowing, together with Freud, how tempting, but also how dangerous it is to hear the stones speak.

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NOTES

1. For a different take on the relationship between archaeology and psychoanalysis vis-à-vis art-historical practice, see Davis (1996).
2. O'Donoghue (2004) provides an interesting reading of the words "*saxa loquuntur*" in relation to Viennese topography; while according to Hake (1993), Freud sets up a comparison between archaeological sites and the female body.
3. The essay originally appeared in the *Westminster Review* in 1867 and was reprinted in the first edition of *The Renaissance* in 1873. This sentence remained unchanged in subsequent editions.
4. It is also possible to see *Portrait of a Lady* (1880-81) as a later development of the same theme: in this novel the Italianized American Gilbert Osmond takes the place of the authentically Italian and aristocratic Count Camillo. On the Count as model for Prince Amerigo, see Maves (1973, 142). William L. Vance reads the story in a tradition of American writing about neo-paganism in Italy that goes from Hawthorne to Gore Vidal (Vance, 1989, 1: 158-60). Vance's argument that the story anticipates *The Ambassadors* (1902) as a tale of an American that undergoes a transformation in Europe is disputable in that here it is the Italian Count who is affected by the transformative power of the past, while the two main American characters remain relatively unchanged by it.
5. For a lively literary account of Freud's essay and an interpretation of Jensen's tale that takes issue with Freud's diagnosis of the protagonist's sexual repression, see Rand and Torok, 1997, 47-75.
6. The relevant passage emphasises the therapeutic concerns of the story: "He has proved himself one of the Valerii; we shall see to it that he is the last, and yet that his disease shall leave

count Camillo in excellent health" (280). For a different interpretation of James's story in the light of Freud's Gradiva essay, see Izzo, 2001, 58-63.

7. Izzo reads "The Last of the Valerii" as enacting a symbolic process of petrification of the living woman; while for Rowe the story represents James's attempt to deal with the difficult legacy of the American feminist Margaret Fuller. Much of the extant criticism of "The Last of the Valerii" pursues the comparison with Mérimée, focusing in particular on James's change of the goddess from Venus to Juno; see for instance Maves (1973, 158) and Naiburg (1993, 156). See Thomas (2010) for a comparison with works by Thomas Hardy and Vernon Lee.

8. The use of archaeology as reality effect is particularly evident in the long discussion over the meaning of the inscriptions found on the base and the arm of the statue (Mérimée, 2008, 142-4).

9. My translation. "Wenn man, wie in Rom der Fall ist, sich immerfort in Gegenwart plastischer Kunstwerke der Alten befindet, so fühlt man sich wie in Gegenwart der Natur vor einem Unendlichen, Unerforschlichen. Der Eindruck des Erhabenen, des Schönen, so wohltätig er auch sein mag, beunruhigt uns, wir wünschen unsre Gefühle, unsre Anschauung in Worte zu fassen: dazu müssten wir aber erst erkennen, einsehen, begreifen; wir fangen an zu sondern, zu unterscheiden, zu ordnen, und auch dieses finden wir, wo nicht unmöglich, doch höchst schwierig, und so kehren wir endlich zu einer schauenden und genießenden Bewunderung. [...] Den ersten Platz bei uns behauptete Juno Ludovisi, um desto höher geschätzt und verehrt, als man das Original nur selten, nur zufällig zu sehen bekam und man es für ein Glück achten musste, sie immerwährend vor Augen zu haben; denn keiner unsrer Zeitgenossen, der zum erstenmal vor sie hintritt, darf behaupten, diesem Anblick gewachsen zu sein."

10. My translation. "Es war dieses meine erste Liebschaft in Rom, und nun besitz' ich sie. Keine Worte geben eine Ahnung Davon. Es ist wie ein Gesang Homers."

ABSTRACTS

This article examines the depiction of archaeology in Henry James's short story "The Last of the Valerii" (1874). Looking, at the same time, back to Prosper Merimée's use of the fantastic in "La Venus d'Ille" (1837) and forwards to Sigmund Freud's parallel between archaeology and psychoanalysis in "The Aetiology of Hysteria" (1896), James sets up an intricate set of relations and metaphorical correspondences between stone and language, sculpture and literature, antiquity and modernity, aesthetics and psychology. "The Last of the Valerii" participates in a literary tradition of the archaeological fantastic that developed alongside the rise of classical archaeology as a tool of *Altertumswissenschaft*, in which authors employ narratives of the return of material objects from antiquity in order to explore difficult questions to do with transgressive desires, repression and sexual identity.

Cet article s'intéresse aux représentations de l'archéologie dans « Le dernier des Valerii », nouvelle de Henry James publiée en 1874. En revisitant les usages du genre fantastique dans « La Vénus d'Ille » (1837) de Mérimée tout en anticipant le parallèle que Freud propose entre l'archéologie et la psychanalyse dans « L'Étiologie de l'hystérie » (1896), James met en place un jeu complexe de relations et de correspondances métaphoriques entre les pierres et le langage, la sculpture et la littérature, l'Antiquité et la modernité, l'esthétique et la psychologie. « Le dernier des Valerii » s'inscrit dans la tradition littéraire du fantastique archéologique, qui se développe à une époque où l'archéologie devient une véritable science de l'Antiquité (*Altertumswissenschaft*),

et dont les intrigues fondées sur le retour d'objets antiques permettent d'explorer la question de la transgression du désir, du refoulement et de l'identité sexuelle.

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